

RESOLUTION NO. 20210826-110

WHEREAS, on August 18, 2021, federal health officials recommended that vaccinated Americans receive a booster shot eight months after receiving their second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to maximize their protection against the virus and extend the durability of their initial vaccine series; and

WHEREAS, the Biden administration is prepared to begin offering the booster shots the week of September 20, 2021; and

WHEREAS, top U.S. health officials based their recommendation regarding booster shots on data showing a decline in the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine over time and its ability to protect against less serious diseases, evidence that booster shots are effective and that more protection may be needed against the dominant Delta variant, and a desire to stave off the potential decrease in the effectiveness of the initial vaccine series against severe illness; and

WHEREAS, specifically, top U.S. health officials from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services noted that, “The available data make very clear that protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection begins to decrease over time ... and in association with the dominance of the Delta variant, we are starting to see evidence of reduced protection against mild and moderate disease; and

WHEREAS, based on our latest assessment, the current protection against severe disease, hospitalization, and death could diminish in the months ahead, especially among those who are at higher risk or were vaccinated during the earlier phases of the vaccination rollout, and for that reason, we conclude that a booster shot will be needed to maximize vaccine-induced protection and prolong its durability;” and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Delta variant of COVID-19 accounts for 98.8 percent of new infections in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the booster shot plan currently being developed by the Biden administration applies to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, but it is anticipated that the booster shot will also eventually be needed for those who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine; and

WHEREAS, Americans who were first to get vaccinated against COVID-19, including health care providers, nursing home residents, and the elderly, will likely be eligible for a booster shot starting September 2021; and

WHEREAS, the Biden administration's plan is subject to approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (also known as FDA); and

WHEREAS, according to federal data as reported by Reuters, more than one million Americans have independently sought an extra vaccine dose before the official decision on booster shots was announced; and

WHEREAS, there are approximately 350 vaccine providers in the Austin/Travis County region and the vaccine is widely available; and

WHEREAS, Austin Public Health traditionally serves as a safety-net vaccine provider that covers low income and uninsured and underinsured individuals, but was designated until approximately July 2021 by the State as a regional hub provider and therefore required to distribute the majority of the vaccine supply to anyone who requested it; and

WHEREAS, on July 9, 2020, City Council approved Ordinance No. 20200709-003 authorizing the health authority to adopt rules reasonably necessary to protect the public's health in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, on December 3, 2020, City Council approved Ordinance No. 20201203-003 amending the expiration date of Ordinance No. 20200709-003 to December 15, 2020; and

WHEREAS, on August 28, 2020, Austin Public Health released a staff memorandum to City Council titled, "Addressing COVID-19 disparities in the Hispanic/Latinx populations," explaining the goal of improved outreach, prevention, and communication includes the need to evaluate outreach efforts and continuously improve them; and

WHEREAS, on October 23, 2020, Austin Public Health announced the launch of the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Coalition, a group of health care and community partners tasked to help Austin Public Health develop strategies for distributing the vaccine; and

WHEREAS, in January 2021, Austin Public Health, in partnership with the Capital Area Vaccine Distribution Coalition, published the Capital Area COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan, which was the product of valuable contributions from community partners who provided a voice for those who they represent and serve; and

WHEREAS, as part of "Phase 3: Sufficient Supply of Vaccine Doses for Entire Population," the Capital Area COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan stated Austin Public Health committed to considering "Communicating the need for

boosters or annual vaccines, if applicable,” which was the sole reference to booster shots in this Plan; and

WHEREAS, on March 25, 2021, City Council directed the City Manager to address the continued impact of COVID-19 by encouraging employers to create programs that will increase access to COVID-19 vaccines by their employees and identifying funding to prioritize mobile testing and vaccination programs; and

WHEREAS, on June 10, 2021, City Council approved an American Rescue Plan Spending Framework that included \$44.3 million to be allocated toward COVID-19 response efforts; and

WHEREAS, on June 10, 2021, City Council approved an ordinance amending the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Austin Public Health Department Operating Budget Special Revenue Fund (Ordinance No. 20200812-001) to accept and appropriate \$4,087,502 in grant funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and CDC, for the delivery of COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach; and

WHEREAS, there is, and has been, a continual need to improve and build upon current outreach and vaccination strategies by the City; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is currently in Stage 5 of the Risk-Based Guidelines and is witnessing a surge in COVID-19 positive cases as a result of the Delta variant, vaccine hesitancy, and lack-of-access concerns that differ for every community; and

WHEREAS, zip codes in the Eastern Crescent, such as 78744, 78741, 78742, and 78617, continue to fall near or below a 50% vaccination rate as it relates to full vaccinations; and

WHEREAS, a booster shot strategy is needed in order to avoid similar disparities in the future; and

WHEREAS, it is crucial to continue to increase access to initial doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, especially for communities hardest hit by the pandemic, while also recognizing that everyone who is or will be vaccinated will likely be encouraged to take the booster shot; and

WHEREAS, through adopting the Fiscal Year 2021- 2022 budget as amended, the City took a step forward in building on lessons learned during the current vaccination process by making an investment in increasing Community Health Worker capacity to address, among other health access needs, both current and future COVID-19 vaccination processes; and

WHEREAS, the development of a booster shot strategy that builds on lessons learned during the initial COVID-19 vaccination process is a similar step forward that is anchored in equity; and

WHEREAS, community booster shots will begin in the midst of both the initial COVID-19 vaccination process and continued testing, all of which will continue to strain the resources of our public health institutions; and

WHEREAS, for this reason, a booster shot strategy for Austin Public Health is needed to ensure efficiency and cohesion moving forward; and

WHEREAS, a robust community engagement and communication strategy on the underlying science and recommendations for booster shots will be essential, as the City will continue to face vaccine hesitancy and access issues, as well as new concerns, such as vaccine fatigue; and

WHEREAS, because there is still much work to be done with vaccine outreach and individuals will become eligible for booster shots eight months after their initial COVID-19 vaccination, the booster shot process could extend late into 2022, thereby necessitating a long-term strategy that addresses the eventual need to reach communities that have not yet been reached for the initial COVID-19 vaccination process; and

WHEREAS, the City must do all it can to stay ahead of the virus; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Council reiterates its commitment to an equitable vaccine distribution strategy that is built on the recommendations of public health officials and community input.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to build on the Capital Area COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan by developing a comprehensive COVID-19 vaccine booster shot strategy, which will be included in an updated version of the Capital Area COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan; and notwithstanding any possible shift in vaccine distribution responsibility assigned by the State or Federal government, this strategy will include, but not be limited to:

- (1) A section dedicated to analyzing lessons learned from the ongoing initial COVID-19 vaccination rollout and process, with a focus on combatting vaccine hesitancy or access issues affecting communities most impacted by COVID-19;

(2) The City's plan to build on its communication and partnership with community, government partners, and other vaccine providers during the booster shot process;

(3) The City's plan to execute a booster shot strategy while continuing to address ongoing vaccine-access issues and prioritizing populations experiencing disparate outcomes related to COVID-19;

(4) The City's communication strategy and plan to educate the public with accurate information on the booster shot process and where residents can get the vaccine from among nearly 350 vaccine providers in the region; and

(5) The City's plan to utilize Community Health Workers from Austin Public Health and community partners to address booster shot outreach efforts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to report to City Council in the form of a memorandum, any outstanding needs of Austin Public Health, Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and other City departments required to implement a booster shot strategy for Austin Public Health, including but not limited to:

- (1) Funding;
- (2) Personnel;
- (3) Training;
- (4) Intergovernmental assistance; and
- (5) New contracts or amendments to existing contracts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to provide an update in the form of a memorandum to City Council detailing the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Coalition's work performed as of the date of the memorandum and future plans, as well as their recommendations on booster shot strategies and subsequent actionable items.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

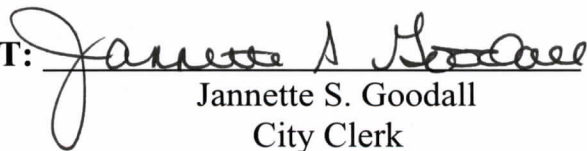
The City Manager is directed to submit an updated version of the Capital Area COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan, the memorandum detailing related City department needs, and the update regarding the COVID-19 Distribution Coalition's work, to City Council by September 21, 2021.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to present the updated version of the Capital Area COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan, the memorandum detailing related City department needs, and the update regarding the COVID-19 Distribution Coalition's work, to City Council during the September 28, 2021, work session.

ADOPTED: August 26, 2021

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk